

Claims:

1. A method for tenderizing meat, said method comprising contacting meat with a tenderizing-effective amount of a protease having limited substrate specificity, wherein said limited substrate specificity is the digestion of only one of the two major protein components of meat; and wherein said protease has been treated to render said protease more thermolabile.
2. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein said protease is derived from a mammal.
3. The method as defined in claim 2, wherein said mammal is bovine.
4. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein said protease is chymosin.
5. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein said protease is obtained from a recombinant host cell transformed with a nucleic acid encoding said protease.
6. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein said meat after tenderization exhibits a relative shear force of between about 50% and about 90% of said meat prior to tenderization.
7. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein said meat after tenderization exhibits a relative shear force of between about 60% and about 80% of said meat prior to tenderization.
8. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein said contacting comprises injection or marination.
9. The method as defined in claim 1, further comprising tumbling said meat.
10. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein said meat is contacted with said protease at a ratio of between about 0.001 and about 0.05 AU/g meat.

11. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein said meat is selected from the group consisting of fresh meat, frozen meat, freeze-dried meat and restructured meat.
12. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein said treatment to render said protease more thermolabile comprises a chemical treatment.
13. The method as defined in claim 12, wherein said chemical treatment comprises treating the protease with an oxidizing agent containing active chlorine.
14. The method as defined in claim 12, wherein said chemical treatment comprises treating the protease with an aliphatic peroxy acid.
15. The method as defined in claim 12, wherein said chemical treatment comprises treating the protease with an inorganic peroxy acid.
16. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the protease digest a myofibrillar protein.
17. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the protease is derived from *Rhizomucor*.
18. The method as defined in claim 1, wherein the protease is derived from *Rhizomucor miehei*.
19. A tenderizing meat composition comprising a tenderizing-effective amount of
 - (i) a thermolabile protease having limited substrate specificity, wherein said limited substrate specificity is the digestion of only one of the two major protein components of meat; and wherein said protease has been treated to render said protease more thermolabile;
and
 - (ii) one or more ingredients selected from the group consisting of brine, curing agents, and flavoring agents.

20. The composition of claim 19, wherein the protease digest a myofibrillar protein.